

(Texas 2009) God Has Provided Something Better for Us

by Zac Poonen

God has provided something better for us, and we need to enter into the full blessing of the new covenant to survive.

Duration: 1:05:22

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:1, 2 Corinthians 2:14, Philipians 4:4, Hebrews 11:4-5, Hebrews 11:7-8

Topics: "New Covenant"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the disappointment faced by Moses when he was unable to enter the land of Canaan due to losing his temper. The speaker emphasizes that when more is given to someone, more is required from them, using the example of Moses and the children of Israel. The speaker highlights the importance of how one lives their life outside of church, including their behavior at home and in the workplace. They also emphasize the significance of following the example of Jesus as a forerunner, rather than just following a set of laws. The sermon concludes with a reminder that it is not just about starting the Christian race well, but also about finishing well.

Transcript

Thank you for inviting me to speak here to your brothers and sisters of this church. I've always considered it a tremendous responsibility to speak the Word of God. I think I started preaching about 48 years ago and more and more as I've grown older, I've been made aware that to stand in the pulpit and minister God's Word is a more serious thing than a surgeon doing a heart operation in a theater.

He can't take it lightly. He's got to concentrate and he can't be playing the fool there. That's not the place to think about other things because the life of a person is in his hands as he operates on that person's heart.

And very often I find that seriousness is not there in a lot of preaching today. Many who minister God's Word are more like surgeons who are more interested in their salary than the patient. That's sad.

I want to share with you what the Lord has laid on my heart. One of the things that changed my life was when I understood that when Christ came, the coming of the second person of the Trinity and the coming of the third person of the Trinity completely changed the possibilities for man on this earth. What is the

difference between the times in which we live and the time in which was before Christ came to earth, between B.C. and A.D.? Basically that the second and third persons of the Trinity came to earth, which is not true before that.

The second person of the Trinity walked on this earth for 33 years and the third person of the Trinity came to dwell permanently on this earth. And if that does not lead us to a far higher degree of life than anyone in the Old Testament, then we have missed something. And I'll tell you, in my Christian life, I was born again 50 years ago, but for the first 16 years of my life I missed something.

I missed something because I was just listening to preachers and they couldn't lead me any higher. They were all repeating the same old thing that everybody else was saying. There was no fresh revelation from God's Word.

And I was living the same old defeated life that 16 years later as I was when I was first converted. It's like a student still sitting in the kindergarten after 16 years struggling with reading C.A.T. and B.A.T. what they mean and what 2 plus 2 totals. I found that a lot of Christians around me were living like that too.

But the Bible says that God says that if you seek me with all your heart you'll find me. It's a law of God. It's in Jeremiah chapter 29.

If you search for God like a 25 cent coin that you lost in the grass somewhere at night, you're not going to look long for it. Maybe search for a little while, maybe a couple of minutes and say, well, after all it's only a quarter. Forget it.

Many people seek God like that. No wonder they never find Him. But if you misplaced a wad of \$100,000 notes somewhere, boy, you'd search for it in a different way.

And if you search for God like that, you'd find Him pretty quickly. If you search for answers. Well, one of the things I sought for was, why is my life so up and down? Inconsistent, like in physics they taught us the sine wave was like that.

My life was very much like that. There were times when I would be up on the mountaintop, then down in the dumps of the valley, up and down and up and down. And as I looked around, most Christians seemed to have the same experience.

But when I read the New Testament, I read words like, rejoice in the Lord always, Philippians 4.4, 24.7. Be anxious for nothing, zero. And 2 Corinthians 2.14, thanks be to God who leads us in triumph always, in every place. I never found verses like this in the Old Testament.

But I found the experience of the apostles was something I did not have. I could praise the Lord, I could raise my voice, I could speak in tongues, I could do so many things like that. But this experience that I saw these apostles had was eluding me.

Somehow I couldn't get it. And I knew there was something I had missed in the Christian life. You know, when you read about the first saint whose life we know some details of, that's Job, he lived before Abraham.

Enoch and Noah lived before him, but we don't know much about their life. But about Job, there's a lot of things written in detail. I noticed something in the book.

There's some amazing things. First of all, when he lost his ten children and all his property in one day, it says he bowed down in worship and said, the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. That's absolutely amazing.

For a man to say that when he's lost all his ten children and all his property in one day. And then after that, a few days later, when God permitted Satan to touch his body and he got sick. Again he says, well, can't we accept good as well as adversity from God? And it says in Job 2 verse 10, in all this Job did not sin with his lips.

But the very next chapter, chapter 3. He says, let the date perish on which I was born. And may that night which said a boy is conceived, may that day be darkness. Why didn't I die at birth? Job 3.11. This is the very next day.

And then if you read through the books, there were times when he would say things like, even if he slays me, Job 13.15, I will trust him. And then again he'd go down to the dumps. Why is God setting me up as a target? And then again he would rise up and say, I know my redeemer lives, Job 19.25. And I know he will stand on the earth and I will see him face to face.

And then back in the dumps again. This was his life. It wasn't consistent like you read in chapter 1 and 2. And yet, all he could do at the end of the book is say to God, Lord, I retract everything I said.

I repent in dust and ashes. God forgive him. And that was pretty much the experience of most of these Old Testament people.

There was Abraham who would rise to tremendous heights when God said to him, when he had no children, you're going to have seed like the stars in the sky. He said, Amen. It will be so.

And a few days later, he'd be telling a lie to a heathen king, saying Sarah is his sister, to save his own life. And he sees his wife being led away to the king's harem. And he keeps quiet.

What type of man of God is this who allows his wife to be taken away to a harem and to save his own life? This is the experience of all these men of God. It goes up and down and up and down and up and down and up and down. Is this all there is for us in the New Testament too? No.

I believe the devil has robbed most Christians of a major part of their inheritance. Many nominal Christians don't even know about the forgiveness of sins. Okay, most of us know about the forgiveness of sins.

Praise the Lord for that. The devil didn't succeed in robbing us of that part of the inheritance. And then the devil succeeded in robbing some people of a genuine experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Well, some of us have had that. But even that, I find that as I've observed the Pentecostal movement and studied it in many parts of the world, including India especially, I find the first generation who met with God and were baptized in the Holy Spirit, they were not Pentecostals to start with, they were in some other denomination, and they had to fight a battle to believe and receive this truth. They came through to a genuine experience that lifted them to a level of the spiritual life that they'd never experienced before.

But like it usually happens, when it came to the second generation, and the third generation, and the fourth generation, it became a tradition. And they didn't have the power of that first generation. And that's always the case.

You know, we read about the Pharisees who were the main opponents of Christ in the Gospels. But if you read about the origin of the Pharisees, the Pharisees means separated. They started as a group of God-fearing people about three, four hundred years before Christ was born.

Because they found that Jewish people were drifting from godliness and becoming worldly. And this group of God-fearing people who called themselves those who were separated Pharisees, they sought to establish standards of holiness and godliness. And they were a very good God-fearing people at the beginning.

But by the time it came down to the third, fourth generation, like in every movement in church history, the form was there. The inner reality had gone. A form of godliness without the power.

The outer shape was there. The inner life had gone. And this is what's happened to so many Christian movements.

And that's why God has always got to start something new. Out of this death has to come a resurrection. And that's the reason why there are so many churches and denominations.

You know, when the Lord spoke to the church in Ephesus, I call it the second letter to the Ephesians. Have you read it, the second letter to the Ephesians? It's in Revelation chapter 2 and verse 1. To the church in Ephesus write. They had many good things.

It was a wonderful church when Paul established it 30 years earlier, 30 or 35 years earlier. And it was the most spiritual of all the churches that Paul had established. We know that from the quality of the letters that Paul writes.

And he writes to the Galatians and Ephesians, to the Philippians, to Galatians and Corinthians. A lot of things he has to correct in them, Thessalonians. But when he writes to the Ephesians, you see a quality of instruction there which is way above all the other letters.

Which tells us the standard of life of those Ephesian Christians. It was probably the finest church in that time and Paul had stayed there for three years. But he warned them.

He said, things are going to be different after I go. He told the elders in Acts 20. You won't stick to the truths I stood for.

Wolves will come in. Paul was a very strict leader. And the wolves were scared to come into the church as long as he was there.

But they waited in the door knowing that Paul can't be here forever. Paul will go one day and then will come our chance to get into this church. And Paul warned them.

You fellows who are elders, be careful. Those wolves are just waiting to get into your church. And they must have thought, boy what an arrogant fellow Paul is.

He thinks only he can keep the church pure. But he was right. The wolves got in.

The leaders of the church began to seek their own. See the condition of this church 35 years later. Verse 5, verse 4. I've got this against you.

You have left your first love. Now we would think that's not a serious crime. They're still keeping the commandments.

They're still driving away false apostles we read in verse 2. They're enduring for the sake of the name, verse 3. But all of that is no value before God. If that fervent love for Christ is gone. Do you know the first commandment is not to praise and worship the Lord.

The first commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. The first commandment is not to go on Sunday for meetings. The first commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

The first commandment is not to read the Bible every day. It's to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And Christians have a tendency to replace that first commandment with so many other things which are not so demanding.

It's quite demanding to worship God, to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. With our whole being. And what the Lord says is, you've left your first love.

You know, we can do the same things 20 years later. And the love behind it is gone. It's something like a married couple.

Here's the wife, who in the early days of marriage, everything is so exciting. She's full of love for her husband. Everything she does in the house is out of love.

Everything she does, whether she's keeping the house in order, or cooking the meal, or anything. It's always been out of love. She's eager to come and open the door when the husband comes back from work.

You go to that same house 10 years later, and it's another story. She's still cooking the meals and keeping the house in order, but she's not at the door when he comes. And he walks in, and she says, well, the food's on the table, you can eat it.

It's there, but it's not the same. That's what's happened to a lot of Christians. That's what's happened to the church in Ephesus.

And the Lord says, when that's happened, you would think it's not a serious crime. You look at a couple like that and say, well, thank God they haven't divorced yet. They're still staying together.

But as far as the Lord's concerned, it's such a serious thing to lose your first love. The Lord says in verse 5, remember from where you have fallen. You have fallen.

Now most people wouldn't think, if they're reading the Bible every day, praying every day, going to the meetings regularly, singing to the Lord and all that, they wouldn't even dream that they have fallen. And the devil doesn't want you to know that you have fallen when the love you had for Jesus is gone. But the Lord calls it a fall.

And it's such a serious fall that he says you've got to repent. Now we think Christians have got to repent when they fall into adultery or cheat or tell lies or something like that. When was the last time you repented because your love for Jesus cooled off? But you were still doing all the external things of Christianity.

But it was not with the same fervent love. Repent and do the deeds you did at first. Otherwise, I will come and remove the lampstand out of its place.

The lampstand, we're told in chapter 1 verse 20, is the church. So what the Lord was saying is, once you've lost your fervent love for me, you can still have your meetings, you can still have your conferences, still read the Bible every day, go through your ritual of prayer and breaking of bread and praise and worship and everything else, but I will derecognize you as a church. How many churches believe that the Lord will derecognize them as a church as far as He's concerned? Even though people on earth would still recognize them as a church because they're a big building, they've got a lot of money and there are a lot of people still there.

But the Lord derecognizes them because they have left their fervent love for Christ. You've got to have spiritual eyes to see that. And when the Lord finally, supposing this elder did not repent when John wrote this letter to him, and if the Lord did derecognize it, externally there would be no visible evidence of it.

Next Sunday there would still be the same service, just as usual, and everything would go in order and the worship would be just as fervent, the Bible reading and the Bible studies and the conference would all go on, but the Lord has left. Christian work today has become so dependent on music and money and good psychological teaching from the pulpit that if one day the Holy Spirit just quietly left the earth, nobody would know it. They'd still carry on.

And yet I should be so sensitive that if the Spirit of God is grieved with me even slightly, it should disturb me even slightly. This is the way we are to live, brothers and sisters, in these last days, if you want to be effective for Christ. It's easy to start the Christian life well, and many of you may have started well, but like in every race, whether in the Olympics or in your school races, there's no prize for those who start well.

Many people start well. The prizes are for those who finish well. Remember that.

The important thing is how you finish, not how you start. How is it going in the Christian race in your life? Is it getting better? Are you going to finish well when Christ comes? In the Old Testament, we read of so many cases of people, even great men of God. Think of David, such a zealous young man, full of faith in God.

In times when he had faith to kill Goliath and then being chased by King Saul during the years between 20 and 30, cave to cave to cave, and he was so... Look at the amazing psalms he wrote. Many of the psalms were written by David before he was 30 years old, when he was running from... He was king when he was 30, and a lot of those psalms, it says at the top, this is when he was running away from Saul. Twenty-five-year-old young man writing a psalm scripture.

But then came prosperity and ease and comfort. And we read when he was 50 years old, he decided to take a break from going to war. In those days, kings were the ones who led their armies to war.

Kings were the generals of the armies. But he took a break from that, and he fell into a sin, a terrible sin. He committed adultery with somebody else's wife and then finished off her husband and married a woman.

There are great dangers when things become easy and comfortable for us. In lands where Christians are persecuted constantly and harassed, it's unlikely that a Christian leader would fall into adultery. You hear such stories where Christians are living in ease and comfort and prosperity, earning hundreds of

thousands of dollars a year, not where they are being chased and hounded for their lives.

And we need to ask ourselves, because relatively speaking, most of you live in comfort compared to most of the rest of Christians in many parts of the world. Do you know that you face certain dangers here, more than Christians in China? I don't feel sorry for the Christians in China. They'll make it through to the end, most of them.

I'm scared for Christians who live in very comfortable surroundings, who earn plenty of money, and who can survive, actually, without God, and who may not even know when the Holy Spirit's departed, because everything else sort of is normal. That's how it was with David, and even many others in the Old Testament, men like Elijah who could bring fire down from heaven. I mean, a couple of days later, the guy is running out of fear of a woman.

This man who could stand up to 450 false prophets and slay them, running when one woman threatens his life. Do you know that the greatest Old Testament saints were like that? Moses lost his temper once so badly that God said, I won't ever let you enter Canaan. Look at the disappointment he faced.

For 40 years he was hoping that he would enter the land of Canaan, and almost at the doorstep of Canaan, because he lost his temper, God said no. We think God is hard. He's not hard.

But to whom more is given, more is required. The examination paper for PhD students is much tougher than the examination paper for kindergarten students. To whom more is given, more is required.

God expected more from Moses. When a man's in a position of leadership, he can't slip up even once. Moses slipped up once.

God said, you can't enter Canaan. But the children of Israel, He gave them nine chances. It's only the tenth time that He said, you read in Numbers 14, you can't enter Canaan.

There's a difference. To whom more is given, more is required. You need to ask yourselves, how much has God given you? God's going to require a lot more from you.

He's going to require a lot more from me, because He's committed a lot to me in the last 50 years that I've known Him. The only way we can survive is if we enter into the full blessing of the new covenant. I want you to turn to Hebrews in chapter 11.

Hebrews 11 is a wonderful chapter of these men of faith in the Old Testament. Great men. But the most important verse in Hebrews 11 is verse 40, the last verse.

God has provided something better for us. Have you read that? What do you read in Hebrews 11? People who split open the Red Sea by faith. God's provided something better for you.

People who pulled down the walls of Jericho by faith. God's provided something better for you. Who could tear lions into pieces like Samson.

God's provided something better for you. Who could get babies when they're 90 years old like Sarah. God's provided something better for you.

All those amazing things written there. It says even about people who experienced resurrection from the dead in verse 35. There are at least two examples of women who got their children back from the dead

through Elijah and Elisha.

God's provided something better for us. It's a wonderful verse. When I read through Hebrews 11, I'll tell you honestly, I don't want any of the things that they had.

I want what's written in verse 40. In the New Covenant, God has provided something better for us than all that these people got. But we've got to have eyes to be open.

We've got to be mature to understand it. The people in the Old Testament were like children, babies. We're like grown up sons.

If someone were to send you a diamond, a very expensive diamond as a gift, wrapped up in nice shiny paper with nice ribbons, and you open the packaging and leave it around, you're taken up with the diamond, excited that somebody sent you such an expensive gift, which probably cost thousands of dollars. But you know what your two-year-old child is interested in? The wrappings. Boy, the shiny paper.

You say, son, don't you want this diamond? Oh, I don't want that. These shiny paper and ribbons, that's the mark of immaturity. Do you know what the diamond is? To partake of God's own nature in Christ.

There's absolutely nothing that God can give you greater than that. His own nature. Everything else is only a wrapping.

Miracles, signs, wonders, speaking in tongues, healing the sick. Great. You can heal the sick and go to hell.

Do you know that? Jesus said that. Matthew 7, 22 and 23, he said, Many will come to me in the last day and say, Lord, we prophesied in your name. We did miracles in your name.

We cast out demons in your name. He said, I don't know you. Get away from me.

Go to hell. How many believe that? Many people would think that if somebody could cast out demons and prophesy and do miracles, he's got to be a man of God. I say maybe, but not necessarily.

That depends on the fruit of his life. Because Jesus said, By their fruit you shall know them. It's very clear in Matthew 7, just before those verses.

Verse 15, 16, he said, By their fruit you shall know them. And he repeats it again, twice. In Matthew 7. But even though it's there, repeated twice by Jesus, By their fruit you shall know a true prophet.

Yet 99% of believers I have known determine a prophet by his gifts, not by his fruit. It's almost as though they're spitting in Jesus' face and saying, You don't know, Lord. I know.

Until you find out one day that he was a false prophet. And you realize that Jesus was right. It's not just that.

Your admiring the wrong man will lead you astray in your life. And destroy you as well. You've got to know who the true prophets of God are.

And it's not by their gift. They may have gifts. Jesus had gifts.

He had more gifts than anybody in the world. He did more miracles and cast out more demons than any human being ever did. But I don't identify him by his gifts.

It's by a fruit. When he said, Learn from me. Matthew 11.29 He didn't say, learn from me how to cast out demons.

He didn't say, learn from me how to heal the sick. He didn't even say, learn from me how to preach. He said, learn from me for I am humble in heart.

Learn humility from me. Many of you think you're zealous Christians. How many of you have obeyed Jesus' command in Matthew 11.29? Learn humility from me.

Many of you are eager to sing better. Do the music better. Maybe you're even seeking for supernatural gifts.

Why not begin with humility? What Jesus said. And gentleness. Learn from me for I am humble and gentle in heart.

I'm not preaching what I haven't practiced. I took those words seriously many years ago. I said, Lord, these are the words of Almighty God, my Lord and my Savior.

You know what's good for me. I don't know what's good for me. Left to myself, I'll pursue after miracles and other things like that, because they are more spectacular.

They are the things that will bring me honor before men. But you told me to learn humility and gentleness from you. I want to do that.

And I know in the long run, that's the thing that will stand me in good stead. If I obey your word. You taught me in your word that if I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and I can't love Jesus with all my heart, 1 Corinthians 13, and I can't love people, I am just a noisy gong.

I don't know whether you've ever stood next to a noisy gong. Sometimes I have, and I feel like running away from there. I shut my ears.

I don't want to hear it anymore. You'll be like that if you speak in tongues, even the tongues of angels, and don't have love. I say, Lord, you've taught me in your word that if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all the mysteries in scripture, and have knowledge of every single doctrine accurately, and I have faith to move mountains, I'm not a man of God.

If I don't have love, I get zero out of a hundred when I stand before God. How many people believe that? I'll tell you, 99% of born-again believers I've met don't believe that. They believe that if a man can move mountains, he's a mighty man of God.

The Bible says, if he doesn't have love, he gets zero before God. He gets 99% or 100% in the eyes of many carnal Christians, God says he gets zero. And before Christ comes, I better change my value system to God's value system.

Because that's the thing that's going to be important when I stand before the Lord. So, what is this better thing that says in Hebrews 11.40? God has provided something better. And he hasn't just left it there.

It's unfortunate that that's the end of the chapter. Because people who have the habit of reading a chapter a day, and finish with chapter 11 today, and start chapter 12 tomorrow, may forget the last verse of chapter 11. Actually, the first four verses of chapter 12 should be the last four verses of chapter 11.

You know, I'm sure that chapter divisions were made by man. It was not in the original. The original Hebrews was just one long letter.

It was divided up into chapters and verses for our convenience. So, read it like this. God has provided something better than all these people had.

So, by faith Abel, by faith Enoch, by faith Noah, by faith Abraham, by faith all these people did all these wonderful things. They were all external things. That's the one common thing about all these people.

Everything they did was outside their body. External, external. God was always interested in the inner life.

Samson could tear lions to pieces on the outside, but the lion of lust in his heart tore him to pieces. He just couldn't conquer. Which is stronger, brothers, an external lion, an African lion, or sexual lust? Just look at Samson's life and you'll know which is stronger.

All the mighty power of the Holy Spirit that he received could not help him to overcome sexual lust. All the mighty power of the Spirit that Moses received couldn't help him to overcome anger. Once he broke the tablets of stone which God himself had written.

Imagine breaking. It's like tearing the Bible into pieces. Would you tear the Bible into pieces? That's what Moses did.

Two tablets of stone and ten commandments were written. He threw it down in anger. The Spirit of God rested upon David, but he couldn't conquer lust when he saw a pretty woman.

There are many who talk about being filled with the Holy Spirit and sing wonderful praises on Sunday, who secretly go to Internet pornography sites on Monday. They're back again next Sunday to sing wonderful songs. What a deceiver the devil is.

They can fool everybody except God. Somebody asked me once in India, Brother Zach, what's the difference between your church and other churches? I said, well, I'll tell you, a lot of areas where our church is not different from other churches. We're not better than other churches.

We never compare ourselves with anybody. We've got hypocrites in our church just like in any other church. Every church in the world has got hypocrites.

We're not perfect just like any other church is not perfect. But I'll tell you one difference. For most churches that I have been to, the Sunday morning service is the most important thing.

It must go well. The music, the preaching, the service, and they say, boy, we had a good time. Even their worship meeting, it's God actually who should have a good time, but they don't think about that.

We had a good time. But I said, for us, it's not Sunday that's the important day. For us, the important day is Monday, and Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday, and Sunday evening after you go away from the meeting.

Those are the times which are important for us, how you live at home, how you behave in your office, the goals and ambitions you have in life, your attitude to money, how you handle money, how you talk to your wife, how you bring up your children, the goals you have for your children. These are more important to us than whether the music went well on Sunday morning or the sermon was very powerful. I've always wondered how Jesus could speak to 5,000 people without a microphone.

I'd like to be like Jesus in that area. He must have been a tough man. Anyway, we are a spoiled crowd of people.

But I see that it's the way we live every day that's more important to God than the external form and ritual. He appreciates the words we sing, but what He sees is whether we mean it. It's not how beautifully I sing, take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold.

But He's seeing whether we mean it. Take my voice and let me sing always only for my King. Do you mean it? That's the thing that's important.

So God has provided something better for us than these guys in the Old Testament had an external life. We can have an inner life that corresponds to the external life. And that's the thing that disturbed me for many years of my Christian life.

You know, in the beginning when we start out our Christian life, I think all of us are sincere. Think of the day you were converted. Really converted.

When you radically turned from sin and you were a nobody. Nobody in the church even knew your name. You were just a nobody sitting in the backseat of the church, but you received Christ.

And you were saved. And you were excited. You wouldn't touch internet pornography that day.

But as time has gone on, you slackened off. This has been the experience of many Christians. It was my experience.

I became an inner backslider without anybody outside knowing about it at all. I'll tell you honestly. I was defeated inwardly and nobody outside had a clue.

Because I was still preaching as well as I ever did. And that's the time when I learned from my own experience that you can be a wonderful preacher and a first class hypocrite at the same time. And nobody would have a clue because 95% of people don't have any discernment of those who sit in most churches.

But I came to a place of desperation in my life and I said, Lord, I ask you only for one thing. If you grant me that, I'll never ask you for anything again in my life. I'm asking you to make my inner life correspond with what I speak outside.

The impression I give to people with my singing and my speaking must be true down to the last dot and tittle inside me. If you grant me that, you've granted me my heart's desire. I will ask for nothing else.

And that's when God baptized me in the Spirit all over again. Filled me up fresh. Turned the direction of my life around.

It's never been the same since then. And that's the time when I began to understand what the New Covenant was all about. It was an inner life.

It was not the external. God had provided something better. And that better thing is the example of Jesus.

Hebrews 12. So when it says, By faith, all these great men. Finally, the last one is, By faith, Jesus.

By faith, Jesus. What did He do? He never split the Red Sea. He never tore lions to pieces.

He never pulled down the walls of Jericho. He endured the cross. And that wasn't just Calvary's cross, which He endured only for a few hours.

There was an inner cross in His life that He endured for 33 years. I want to ask you whether you've got a revelation on that. If you get revelation on the inner cross that Jesus bore for 33 years, you've discovered the secret of Jesus' life.

And I sought to discover that. And I'll tell you how I came to this conclusion that He had an inner cross. Because He said, in Luke 9.23, If anyone will come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

He could not possibly ask Me to do something He never did Himself. He is the Captain of our salvation. I used to be in the military in India.

And they taught me there, when I was in training in the academy, never to ask a soldier or a sailor to do something you couldn't do yourself. Never to ask a sailor to do something you're scared to do yourself. Never to ask him to go somewhere where you're scared to go yourself.

If you're a captain, you're a leader, you've got to go in front. And I saw that in Jesus. He would never, never ask me to do something which He hadn't done Himself as a man when He was on earth.

How in the world could He ask me to carry My cross every single day if He carried it only for less than 24 hours? There must be another cross which was spoken of here when it says He endured the cross. It was an inner cross. And I tried to understand what that inner cross was.

And I saw it was not doing My own will, but the will of My Father. And then I saw in John 6, 38, the one sentence in which Jesus described His entire earthly life. It's a wonderful verse.

In one sentence, Jesus described His entire earthly life and ministry. It's a one sentence autobiography. And it says, it reads like this.

I came from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. So that's the cross, you know. This is My will.

This is God's will. And I cross out My will and do God's will. There's a cross on which I die to My will and do God's will.

And Jesus says He came from heaven. People say He came from heaven to die for the sins of the world. Yeah, that was one small part of what He came from heaven for.

But if you were to sum up all of His life, He didn't only die on the cross. He healed many sick people. He preached many wonderful messages.

He lived for 30 years making stools and benches and submitting to Mary and so many things. All of that can be summed up in one sentence. He did the will of His Father.

And in order to do the will of His Father, He had to deny or put to death His own will. Now when He was in heaven, He never had to put anything to death. He could say in heaven in all the ages of eternity when He was equal with the Father as the Son of God.

He could say, I do My own will because it is the same as My Father's will. That's what He said for millions and millions of years. I do My own will because it is the same as My Father's will.

It is the same as the will of the Holy Spirit. But the moment He came in our human body, in order to be an example for us, He took one part of us. Not just that He had eyes and ears and hands and legs and was in every way a baby just like any other baby boy.

There was something inward that He had which we all have. It's a strong self-will. You have it.

Everybody has it. The extrovert who is loud and shouts, he has it and the quiet introvert has it too. Just as strong.

A strong self-will. It's the reason for all the clashes between husbands and wives. It's the reason for all the fights in churches.

It's the reason why you can sneakily go to a pornographic site on the internet. It's the reason why you can cheat on your income tax. It's the reason why you can lust with your eyes and lose your temper.

The root of it all is your strong self-will. If Jesus didn't have that, He was not like us. The most important part of us, He didn't have that.

He would have been just like a mannequin on the outside looking like a human being but not really a human being because He didn't have this will that we have. But He came with that will and sometimes He had to struggle with it as we read in the Garden of Gethsemane where He said, Father, if you ask Me for My will, I don't want to drink this cup but I'll deny it. I'll say no to it and do Your will.

It wasn't just once in Gethsemane. All through His life, God has provided something better for us. Means, He has provided a solution for this terrible thing that's ruining our life.

That's our strong self-will which is ruining our marriages, which is bringing divorce in Christian homes and in homes that are not divorcing, they are so unhappy at home. It's bringing conflict in churches. It's making people hypocrites who are defeated, defeated, defeated in their private life but have to act spiritual on Sunday morning when they stand on the platform.

Is there a solution to this hypocrisy? There is. God has provided something better that we can run the race, fixing our eyes on Jesus. It says in Hebrews 12, 2, who endured the cross despising the shame and is set down in the right hand of the throne of God.

We're told to run a race looking unto Jesus our forerunner. You know, one of the titles of Jesus which most Christians haven't even heard about is forerunner. You've heard of Him as Savior, Shepherd, Resurrection in the life, the way of truth in the life.

Have you heard of Him as forerunner? It's one of the most important titles if you want to live a holy life. It's a title given to Him in Hebrews 6, in verse 20. Jesus our forerunner.

Forerunner means someone who ran the same race in front of us. Now, the reason why I bring in that here is because it says God has provided something better for us a forerunner. He hasn't given us a law.

He's given us a forerunner. In the Old Testament He gave only laws. Thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt, thou shalt not, thou shalt, thou shalt not.

That was all. But in the New Testament He's given us an example. And like the illustration I like to use is if I want to teach you swimming and I presented the principles of swimming, say, on a screen like this and say, this is how you've got to move your hands, this is how you've got to move your legs, this is how you've got to breathe, and I spend one hour describing swimming and I tell you, OK fellas, go and jump in the pool and swim.

Every one of you will drown. You can't learn swimming there. All the laws are absolutely correct.

I can give you a manual on swimming. You don't learn that way. But if somebody were to come tell you, say, listen, come with me and watch me.

OK? Watch how I move my hands, how I lift my head, how I breathe, and I put my head into the water and lift it again. Which is easier? I tell you, 10,000 manuals are not as good as one example. And that's the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

In the Old Covenant they had manuals. There were actually 613 commandments, not just 10. If you read Leviticus, it numbers a whole lot of commandments.

But in the New Covenant, we don't have any commandments. We have an example. Jesus says, follow me.

That's so much better. If you follow rules and regulations, you'll never come to a life of overcoming. How do I understand humility? Well, not by looking into the dictionary, by looking at Jesus.

Learn from me. You know, if you walk with a proud man, you'll become proud. You walk with a humble man, you'll be humble.

And if you haven't become humble, I can tell you you're not walking with Jesus. He was the humblest man that walked on this earth. And if you're walking with Him, the more you walk with Him, the more you will live a life of brokenness and humility and obedience to God every day.

So don't deceive yourself that you're walking with Jesus if you're not becoming more like Him. To me, there's only one test that I'm walking with the Lord. That I'm acquiring more of the virtues that are there with Him.

You know, I used to be in a church where when I was young, where we were compelled to read our Bible on our knees every morning. And I found, you know, we were a number of Christian workers. We'd all be reading our Bible on our knees for half an hour every morning and half an hour at night.

But during the day, I found people covetous, fighting, quarreling, and there didn't seem to be any change in their life. But there was this faithful ritual of reading, Bible reading every morning. And I was puzzled about that because I know times when I've spent just 15 minutes with a godly man, listening to him.

15 minutes. And it's changed my life. I said, imagine if 15 minutes with a godly man can influence me so much.

Imagine spending half an hour with God Himself. Boy, how is it these guys are not changing? And the Lord said to me, they're not spending time with me. Just reading a book.

It's like a history book. They get information. You know, you can read the Bible without spending any time with God.

It's just a book. It could be a novel. It could be a history book.

You read it like that. And I think most Christians, their Bible reading, they don't contact God at all. I know in my life.

And if you don't touch God, all your Bible reading is pretty worthless. You just get a lot of information. God has provided something better for us that we can look at Jesus.

And that's the main reason why He's given us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, to me, the most wonderful ministry of the Holy Spirit in my life is that He shows me the glory of Jesus more and more. And then transforms me, gives me a tremendous passion to be like Him.

And transforms me into that likeness. Shows me that this is the only thing that's going to last when all the world perishes. All your gifts will perish.

All your wealth will perish. But if you have acquired Christ's character, that's the thing that will make your ministry useful on earth. And that's the thing that you'll carry into eternity.

God has provided something better. That's why you don't hear of Peter suddenly falling into adultery. Or Paul falling like that like you hear nowadays.

It just didn't happen in those days. These were men who could say thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph. These were men like Paul could say in 1 Corinthians 11, follow me as I follow Christ.

Every Christian leader should be able to say that. Follow me as I follow Christ. Come and live in my home and see how I live with my wife and children.

See how I bring up my children. See how I live with my wife. See how I work with my co-workers.

Come to our church and see how we relate to one another. Come and see. The Old Testament emphasis was come and hear.

Don't go look into his life. You may find some terrible things. But come and hear this powerful message.

But don't go behind the screen and see how he lives. That's the difference in the New Covenant. Come and see.

Come and look into every area of my life. There's nothing to be hidden. It's transparent.

It says about the New Jerusalem, which is the church, it's it was made Revelation 21 18. A city made of pure gold like clear glass. I like that word.

You know the difference between clear glass and frosted glass? You can't see through frosted glass. Clear glass is transparent. And the church is like that.

The true church of Christ. There's a transparency about it. You can, it's clear glass.

You can look into every area of their life behind. What they speak is how they live. And God would rather have ten creatures like that in the world than a thousand miracle workers.

What do you want to be? If God were to say to you tonight in a dream, say, I'll give you a choice. I'll give you supernatural ability to do miracles, to be an evangelist, to be a powerful preacher. The Lord says the other alternative is I'll give you a godly life with no gifts.

Which would you choose? Be honest. What would you choose? What are you seeking for today? What are the things you feel are valuable? Many people in the Old Testament had amazing gifts. Think of Elijah who could bring fire down from heaven.

Think of David who could kill Goliath. But God has provided something better. And what I want to ask you is, has the devil robbed you of your inheritance? And if God can find men like Paul who can say follow me as I follow Christ, he can build godly homes and godly churches.

Let me say this in conclusion. The Christian life and ministry is like a three-story building. The foundation very important is God's perfect love for us.

He loves us as he loved Jesus. I never want to stand on any other foundation. His unconditional love for me.

He loves me when I've failed. He accepts me just as I am. I don't need any other love in the world because I don't need the support of other people's love because I've found unconditional love in my heavenly Father.

Nobody loves like Him. Nobody is so kind in the way He looks at our failures. People are hard on those who fail but not God.

He loves us. That unconditional love is the foundation and I'll never move away from it. I'd advise you never to move away from that.

And on that, we build the first story, the first floor which is our personal walk with God where we keep our conscience absolutely clear. You may not have overcome certain sins but the next best is to keep your conscience clear. As soon as you've slipped up, you confess it and ask the Lord to forgive you.

On top of that, you build the second story is your family life. The way you live at home, the way you bring up your children, the way you relate to your wife as an equal heir of the grace of life and where people can come in and see and taste a little bit of the atmosphere of heaven in your home. On top of that, we build a church.

The tragedy is that a lot of people have tried to build a church without these two stories underneath. They don't have a personal walk with God, purity and humility. They don't have a family life that backs up what they're preaching.

You know your children know you better than anybody in the church. If I look at the way your children have grown up, I'll know how you lived at home. By the time your children are 25 or 30 years old, I'll know how you lived at home because they've seen you better than anybody else.

That's the foundation for building the church. And the church is the third story. God wants such churches, such homes and such lives.

And in each of these stories, the better thing God has offered us is a heavenly life, a consistent life, not an up-and-down one like Old Testament people. This is the genuine Spirit-filled life. All the other extra things like speaking in tongues and revelations and all our wrappings, good extra bonuses God throws in, but it's not the central thing.

I thank God for them. I thank God for the gift of tongues, the gift of prophecy. I thank God for being able to pray for people and see them helped, etc.

But the most wonderful thing of all is that I can partake of God's nature. I want to invite you all to seek after that. Let's pray.

Let's bow our heads before God. Heavenly Father, I pray you'll help each of us to have our priorities right. We don't want the devil to rob us of our inheritance.

Everyone here, precious children of God, I pray that everyone will get their full inheritance here on this earth. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you.

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